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## Communist anniversaries as a symphony of power and science (case study of Bulgaria)<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

The aim of the paper is to show the interplay between the power and the science in the context of cultural memory. The focus is on the Cyrillo-Methodian anniversaries in Bulgaria in the communist period, and the object of the analysis is the anniversary of 1969. The context relates to the process of development of new historiography and the functionalization of the nation-centric narrative. The main issue discussed is how the Communist Party, as a political institution, and the Bulgarian Academy of Science,

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as an academic institution, cooperated to establish a new vision of society. The discussion offers an interpretation in the light of the Orthodox concept of the symphony of power perceived as a metaphor of the relation between the secular and the spiritual power.

**Keywords:** *history of science, science-power, Bulgaria, communism, Cyrillo-Methodian tradition, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*

## Komunistyczne jubileusze jako symfonia władzy i nauki (przypadek Bułgarii)

### Abstrakt

W artykule zostaje podjęta kwestia relacji między władzą i nauką z punktu widzenia problematyki pamięci kulturowej. Przedmiotem uwagi są jubileusze cyrylo-metodejskie w okresie komunizmu w Bułgarii w kontekście zjawiska funkcjonalizacji narracji narodocentrycznej i rozwoju nowej historiografii narodowej. Postawione zostaje pytanie o to, jak Bułgarska Partia Komunistyczna (jako instytucja polityczna) i Bułgarska Akademia Nauk (jako instytucja naukowa) współpracują w celu zbudowania nowej wizji społeczeństwa. Za szczególny wyraz tej strategii uznany zostaje jubileusz 1969 roku: 1100 lat od śmierci Konstantyna-Cyryla Filozofa (tj. św. Cyryla), 100 lat od powstania Bułgarskiej Akademii Nauk i 25 lat od Rewolucji (tj. przejęcia władzy w Bułgarii przez Partię Komunistyczną). Punktem odniesienia są wystąpienia działaczy partyjnych oraz prace uznanych naukowców (historyków i literaturoznawców), podporządkowane komunistycznej rytualności jubileuszowej i służące wykazaniu bezpośredniego związku między władzami komunistycznymi a dziedzictwem cyrylo-metodejskim. W artykule zaproponowana zostaje interpretacja tej relacji w świetle prawosławnej koncepcji symfonii władzy, traktowanej jako metafora relacji między władzą świecką i duchową.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *historia nauki, relacja nauka-władza, Bułgaria, komunizm, tradycja cyrylo-metodejska, Bułgarska Akademia Nauk*

## 1. Introduction

The pathos of the title is intended to recall the atmosphere of the commemorative events not only during the communist regime (although my paper deals precisely with this period of history of Bulgaria). I use the metaphor of symphony not only because of its etymology, but also to bring up the relation between the secular and the spiritual authority as interpreted in the Orthodox tradition. *Symphonia* is a theological concept which posits the two powers as complement to each other and in theory neither is subordinated to the other as they both serve one purpose: the people's salvation.<sup>2</sup>

My paper deals with the history of science in Bulgaria from the point of view of cultural studies as I am interested in the official image of the commemorations, not the archival one. I am focused on the ideological creation, not the historical reconstruction.<sup>3</sup> I examine the tradition of SS. Cyril and Methodius, and it is so not only because I work in the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre. SS. Cyril and Methodius do appear to be a particularly important "site of memory."<sup>4</sup> As a fundamental component of the Bulgarian identity, which means a permanent element of the Bulgarian cultural memory,<sup>5</sup> the development of their image may help reveal its conceptual changes in history. That is to say, the great narrative of Cyril and Methodius serves the cultural policy not only during the communism.

At the beginning, it is necessary to give some historical facts about these two figures. Cyril and Methodius lived in the 9th century and were Byzantine Christian theologians and missionaries sent by the Emperor Michael III to enlighten the Moravian Slavs, and thus – to strengthen the Byzantine influence in the region. Their contribution is both missionary and cultural in nature. Cyril invented the Slavic (Glagolitic)

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<sup>2</sup> For details on the theological concept of *symphonia*, see for example Schmemmann 1963; Meyendorff 1983. The topic is important in the context of the contemporary relation between the Orthodox church and the state. Cf. e.g. Ghodsee 2009; Kalaitzidis 2014.

<sup>3</sup> This is the reason why I work not with archives but with various texts of culture related to the communist jubilees: literary works, journalistic writing, scientific publications, political speeches.

<sup>4</sup> Here I refer to the meaning given by Szpociński 2003 and Szwat-Gylybowa 2011.

<sup>5</sup> For details, see i.e.: J. Assmann 2009.

alphabet in order to be able to – together with his brother – translate the Bible and the liturgical books into Slavonic and thus to introduce Christianity to the Slavic peoples. Methodius continued this mission as archbishop in Moravia. After his death in 885, his disciples were forced into exile because the Slavonic liturgy posed a threat to the local Latin hierarchs (despite the papal approval) and eventually they found shelter in Bulgaria, where they continued with their holy mission. As a result, Bulgaria developed its own Christian culture on the basis of the deed of Cyril and Methodius, and exported it to other Slavic states thus contributing to the shaping of the specific cultural community of *Slavia Orthodoxa*. Hence, Bulgarians refer to the Old Church Slavonic as Old Bulgarian which is considered the first literary Slavic language.

The final absorption of the Cyrillo-Methodian legacy into the cultural memory of the Bulgarians took place during the period of the Bulgarian National Revival in the 19th century when a shift from a strictly religious (traditional) understanding of the Holy Brothers to the secular (modern) one happened. It was claimed that by creating the Slavonic alphabet and literature they had introduced the Slavonic/Bulgarian people into the community of civilized and literary peoples/nations. As a result, Cyril and Methodius became patrons not only of education and enlightenment in general, but also of Bulgarian *cultural missionism*. This notion is further developed during the interwar period for the purposes of the Orthodox Church and the official authorities, although it has been used in almost all possible contexts.<sup>6</sup>

After 1944, when the power was taken by the Bulgarian Communist Party,<sup>7</sup> the popularity of the Cyrillo-Methodian narrative declined. The reason lies in the following facts: firstly, the narrative was associated with its use before the war, when the two saints had been officially associated with the interests of the tsar and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and thus they had served a “chauvinist ideology”; secondly, the narrative recalls that it was the Bulgarians who had given the Slavonic script to the Russians, the fact which, at that time, was not quite

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<sup>6</sup> For details, see: Wojtczak 2006; Szwat-Gylybowa 2008; Szwat-Gylybowa, Barlieva, Moroz-Grzelak 2011; Dzhevietska 2016a; 2016b; Naydenova 2011; 2017a; Rohdewald 2014.

<sup>7</sup> This date is used for narrative value. Officially, the power was taken in 1947. For more see: Znepolski 2008.

convenient for the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup> In the first years after the Victory, the most important aspect was the internationalism, as well as the superiority of the Soviet people. In time, however, the Bulgarian authorities returned to the figures of Cyril and Methodius, as they could serve their interests – although not as saints but as educators.

The ideological change is noticeable after the April Plenum of the Party in 1956 – as a sign of de-Stalinization.<sup>9</sup> It can be seen both in the attitude towards the so-called “creative intelligentsia” and in the changing views on science, especially history and social sciences. The culmination of the official absorption of the Cyrillo-Methodian issues came with the establishment of my Institute, the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre, in 1980, and the process of the institutionalization of the Cyrillo-Methodian studies being completed. Nevertheless, the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition had gained importance much earlier. The Cyrillo-Methodian anniversaries were an indicator of the relation between power and science, as well as of the changes in the status of the historical studies, and in particular the studies focused on the issue of Cyril and Methodius.

The paper focuses on the anniversaries and the relation between power and science, illustrated by the relation between the Bulgarian Communist Party and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences as a representative of the national science community. The regime’s attitude to the “scientific intelligentsia” has not been properly investigated in contrast to the issues with the “creative intelligentsia” and the “fight on the cultural front”.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, these two issues are strictly connected. In this paper, I will make an attempt to analyse only a particular event from a given point of view.

## 2. Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Communist Party

During the communist regime in Bulgaria, there were seven jubilees which brought about the issue of Cyril and Methodius: 100 years since the first Bulgarian celebration of Cyril and Methodius’ Day (in 1957) –

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<sup>8</sup> Naydenova 2017a; [2017b](#).

<sup>9</sup> For more on cultural policy in this context see Kalinova 2011.

<sup>10</sup> For more, see Elenkov 2008; Kalinova 2011.

a very important event during the Bulgarian National Revival; 1100 years since the Moravian mission, which was considered as a cornerstone for the Slavic literacy (in 1963); 1050 years since the death of Clement of Ohrid, the most famous of the Cyrillo-Methodian disciples (in 1966); 1100 years since Cyril's death (in 1969); 1050 years since Cyril's birth (in 1977); 1300 years since the foundation of the Bulgarian state (in 1981); 1100 years since Methodius' death (in 1985). The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences played a crucial role in all of them.

The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences is a direct successor of the enlightenment tradition of the National Revival, and the Bulgarian Literary Society, founded in 1896. After the Liberation in 1878, the Bulgarian Literary Society was granted autonomous status and was approved by the Minister of Popular Enlightenment as an independent institution and legal entity. It has both national and representative functions. In 1912, it was established as the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and in 1940 it was renamed the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Arts. During this time, it had full autonomy (elections and freedom of research) and great prestige in society. The scholars firmly stood for their academic autonomy, as well as the affirmation of the Bulgarian national idea.<sup>11</sup>

The status of the Academy during the communist regime was established in 1947 with it being placed "under the Office" of the Council of Ministers, which means that it was directly dependent on the Party. In 1949, further restrictions were introduced to make it "subordinated" and "accountable" to the Council of Ministers. The autonomy of research and finances of the Academy was taken away, although the Academy still "represented" all scientific initiatives in the state, being the only official research institution in Bulgaria.<sup>12</sup>

According to the communist propaganda, the reorganization of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences brought democracy into the institution and supported the effort of doing comprehensive research, as well as the reconciliation of theory and practice, and the rapprochement between the Academy and the masses. Its aim was not only to revive but also to liberate

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<sup>11</sup> On the history of the BAS, see Zhivkova 2006; *Istoriya* 1971; *Istoriya* 2015; *Istoriya* 2017. Cf. Chichovska 1995.

<sup>12</sup> On the communist reorganization of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, see Zhivkova 2006; *Istoriya* 2017, pp. 13–29.

the sciences,<sup>13</sup> and thus to show that scientific success and excellence was not something that the previous governments were able to achieve.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the great reverence for the “Bulgarian science authorities”, proclaimed by the Party”, the general attitude towards the scholars and researchers remained ambivalent, thus mirroring the Marxist attitude towards the intelligentsia. On the one hand, the intelligentsia was considered suspicious due to its educational status, and it did not meet the requirements for class membership because it incarnated the mentality of the bourgeois. On the other hand, the purges among the elites resulted in staff shortages and a high level of illiteracy among the party members, so well-educated people were needed to fill in the roles of future social engineers. Science, especially the exact (and life) science, which is directly related to the modernization of the state and the economy, is an inherent feature of the Marxist utopia, and a crucial measure to reach the goal.

The ideological purges among the Bulgarian scientific elite had affected the previous generation of scholars that had been perceived as fascists. The Academy was blamed that it had not participated in the fight against the chauvinist policy of the monarchy and that some of the most active proponents of the capitalistic ideology were among its employees. Nevertheless, after the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences had been restructured, some of the older scientists were brought back to work, but not on scientifically significant positions. They served only through their practical knowledge and experience. The science was subordinated to the ideal of socialism. According to the propaganda, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences had been successfully redirected toward the practical issues.<sup>15</sup> However, after a few years, in the 1950s, the idea that science should play a bigger role in the process of “socialist construction” and promote socialist ideology, surfaced again – in the sense that science should support the Party’s activities, both theoretically and practically. In this regard, a culmination came with the great anniversary of 1969, which was also celebrated by UNESCO. This is the event that I will attempt at elaborating on.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Bozhilov 1969, pp. 60–74.

<sup>14</sup> Bozhilov 1969, p. 127.

<sup>15</sup> Zhivkova 2006, p. 208.

<sup>16</sup> Of course, the great jubilee of 1981 is the highpoint, but I interpret it as a culmination of other elements, as a development of other tendencies in the Party politics.

The commemoration of 1969 was not only exceptional, but its context was charged with meaning, and thus – very interesting for the researcher. In the same year, the Bulgarian state celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Revolution and the 100th anniversary of the Academia. Moreover, the anniversary's dimensions were determined by the political atmosphere of the 1960s and the changes in the policy of the Party. Overall, this decade was under the sign of alternately “pulling and loosening the reins” of the intelligentsia as a result of de-Stalinization, and the latest events in the Communist bloc.<sup>17</sup> It was of extreme importance due to one turning point, namely the change in the status of the historical and social sciences within the policy of the Party.

### 3. Science – History – Nation

Already in 1962, the 8th Congress of the Party defined the role of social sciences in the process of establishing socialism. In 1964, the National Conference of Bulgarian Historians reformulated the contribution of sciences while indicating the need for a greater emphasis on studying the cultural development in the history of Bulgaria to support the fight against the bourgeois historical views, and to promote the role of knowledge among the people. In 1966, the 9th Congress of the Party openly stated its support for strengthening the patriotic education where the historical sciences should have a very important role. The emphasis should be put on the value of the people/the nation throughout the history.

It is known that communism is the legal heir of all progressive, humane and valuable things created in the past in literature and art, science and ideology, technology and lifestyle. Socialist culture is impossible without the study and use of the cultural achievements of the past. This is a huge educational factor and a necessary prerequisite for further progress. Therefore, we reject on principle nihilism and sectarian primitivism in this matter. That is why historical science has to reveal everything that has been created

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<sup>17</sup> Khristova 2000; Kalinova 2011; 2014.



by our nation in the past and that can support the patriotic education of the people now and its cultural growth.<sup>18</sup>

This decision supported the development not only of the historical science, but also of the “nationalist” view, although in the communist terms. I use “nationalism” in quotes, because the cultural context is different, and it should be noted despite the fact that the aim and the background of the phenomenon seem to be the same. Many scholars have already pointed out the nationalist inclinations of the Marxists, or even the crucial link between the socialism and the nationalism in the Eastern European countries.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, we should not forget that the ideological attitude to the national issue has been constantly changing, depending on the situation. In practice, during the Russian Revolution and shortly afterwards the focus on nationalism was seen as an effective instrument for the mobilization of the masses and the legitimization of the power. In 1925, Stalin introduced his famous formula: “national in form and socialist in content”:

Proletarian in content, national in form such is the universal culture towards which socialism is proceeding. Proletarian culture does not abolish national culture, it gives it content. On the other hand, national culture does not abolish proletarian culture, it gives it form. The slogan of national culture was a bourgeois slogan as long as the bourgeoisie was in power and the consolidation of nations proceeded under the aegis of the bourgeois order. The slogan of national culture became a proletarian slogan when the proletariat came to power, and when the consolidation of nations began to proceed under the aegis of Soviet power. Whoever fails to understand the fundamental difference between these two situations will never understand either Leninism or the essence of the national question.<sup>20</sup>

The idea was developed in 1927 during the Joint Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the C.P.S.U.(b).1.:

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<sup>18</sup> Zhivkov 1985a, p. 286.

<sup>19</sup> See for example Pipes 1980; Simon 1991; Verdery 1995; Górný 2007; Baeva 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Stalin [1954a](#).

(...) we are now in favour of developing the national culture of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., their national languages, schools, press, and so forth, *on the basis of the Soviets*. And what does the reservation “on the basis of the Soviets” mean? It means that *in its content* the culture of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. which the Soviet Government is developing must be a culture common to all the working people, a socialist culture; in *its form*, however, it is and will be different for all the peoples of the U.S.S.R.; it is and will be a national culture, different for the various peoples of the U.S.S.R. in conformity with the differences in language and specific national features.<sup>21</sup>

The direction for the revision of the past in this respect was laid out by a resolution from 1934, “Concerning the Teaching of National History in USSR Schools.”<sup>22</sup> The aim was to show the present as a logical consequence of historical development, i.e. a historical necessity. As a result, the Russian past was partly rehabilitated, and the national symbolism was selectively revitalized. With the science being an expression of a given historical period and understood as a step of social development, the bourgeois historiography was officially rejected. In practice, the Stalinization of historiography was provided by new scientific publications (especially by a new synthesis of the national history) and new methods of research, both subordinated to the Marxist philosophy of history. However, the main historical/historiographical questions remained the same.

The “nationalist” perspective provided the legitimization of power only if it was an answer to both the people’s and also the intelligentsia’s *habitus* in this manner. The class-based rhetoric promised the Bulgarians a better future, even conforming with their collectivist and egalitarian views on the human and state relations,<sup>23</sup> but neglected the national pride, strongly articulated and manifested in the 1930s and during the Second World War. It was crucial to condition and nurture a positive vision of the national community, to put the nation in the centre

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<sup>21</sup> Stalin [1954b](#).

<sup>22</sup> Roberts [1965](#), p. 106.

<sup>23</sup> Znepolski 2008.

and to focus on the national values. That is why the “nation-centric perspective” seems to be a better term. All the more, the Bulgarian word “narod” refers to both the nation (although there is also a word “natsia”, also used by the communists) and the people. In the Bulgarian cultural context this ambiguity was crucial, since it gave an opportunity to the authorities to play with meanings and to different social groups (classes) a chance to identify with the whole community.

The Soviet model of collective identity, which was ideological, and not ethnic, remained stable until Stalin’s death and the first political crisis in the Eastern bloc in 1956. After a new generation of communists succeeded in establishing themselves in the late 1950s, the idea of national identity could be reformulated. In addition, the new decade was also marked by a slower pace of economic development, so a new strategy was required. Precisely in this context the pragmatic approach to nationalism of the First Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party Todor Zhivkov was put into work.<sup>24</sup>

Although after the 8th Congress of the Party in 1962 the term “cultural revolution” in the meaning of “comprehensive education and assimilation of cultural values created by previous generations” was introduced,<sup>25</sup> it was in 1963 that – in order to receive economic help from Moscow – Zhivkov announced a plan for Bulgaria to become “the 16th Soviet Republic”. The national sovereignty was put at stake within purely economic negotiations. The ideological explanation was simple:

People understand sovereignty as having food, being alive.  
This is sovereignty – happiness and prosperity of the people.  
We work for the people, not for the form.<sup>26</sup>

In 1966, at the First Congress of Culture in 1966, Zhivkov claimed:

The three inexhaustible sources of the socialist culture: the rich national heritage, the socialist modernity and the progressive culture of mankind, especially the socialist and, first of all, the culture of the Soviet people.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Baeva 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Stamenova 2012, p. 86.

<sup>26</sup> Baeva 2007; Khristov 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Stamenova 2012, p. 186.

At the meeting with the Komsomol in the same year, he even recognized the mistakes made in the education of the youth:

In our whole work, we largely underestimate the patriotic education of the people, especially of the younger generation. Is there another country where the historical past was spat on? And we spit on our glorious past.<sup>28</sup>

The new goal was to fight off the nihilistic attitude to Bulgarian culture that had led to a growing popularity of Western imperialistic culture among the young Bulgarians. For the first time the issue of patriotic upbringing was on par with the internationalist education. The Bulgarian pride seemed to be better motivated by a vision of the glory of the past rather than by the story about the oppressed classes.

The formal way to return to the national past, including the “dark” and “fanatic” Middle Ages, and to adapt it according to the needs of the communist education was shown at the Plenum of the Party in 1967. Zhivkov formulated his famous theses to support the rehabilitation of the past:

Our history, our past must be developed not for itself, not for its own sake, but in the closest relation with the present and for the proper patriotic education of our people, of the youth. The separation of the past and the present, any deviation from the Marxist-Leninist positions in clarifying and understanding the historical facts may drift into nationalism.<sup>29</sup>

The great return to the past was realized through revisions of the traditional repertoire of memory aimed at formulating a new canon, which could serve the ideological purposes. As Paul Connerton points out, setting up new principles is also remembering, conscious or not.<sup>30</sup> According to Aleida Assmann, however, there is no storage memory in a totalitarian state. The process of formulating the new canon has to

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<sup>28</sup> Baeva 2007. Cf. Zhivkov 1985b, pp. 321–322.

<sup>29</sup> Zhivkov 1985b, p. 323.

<sup>30</sup> Connerton 1989, p. 13.

be based on active forgetting, which implies either intentional destroying or *modifying* its content.<sup>31</sup>

In 1968, during the July Plenum of the Party, Zhivkov talked specifically about the importance of social sciences for the development of the state, and thus, about the need for properly coordinated and targeted policy on science. The aim was “to reveal” the process of cultural development of Bulgaria in the history:

Socialism has not only preserved the achievements of Bulgarian science, but also created brilliant conditions for its spread among the people, and opened a wide, previously unseen space for the scientific thought to flourish (...) The science has become an organic part of the national cause, a powerful driving force and foundation of the scientific leadership of our socialist development. (...) The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences cannot fully accomplish its historic mission unless its institutes and the Academia in general are bound more tightly to the needs of production and social development, to the main tasks that are determined by the people. (...) The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences is called to make an even greater contribution to the spiritual education of the people, in order to raise the people's patriotic and international consciousness, the consciousness of a nation that is a creator and a founder of the new society.<sup>32</sup>

As a result, the following years were marked by attempts of the Academia to internalize this official line. According to the proclamation on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the contribution of the social and historical sciences to the patriotic and internationalist education of Bulgarians in the last 25 years was already huge:

The work of Bulgarian historians contributes to the strengthening of the socialist consciousness of the Bulgarian people, to its unity, to the upbringing of the young generations

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<sup>31</sup> A. Assmann 2008, pp. 106–107.

<sup>32</sup> Zhivkov 1985, pp. 398–400.

in the spirit of socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism.<sup>33</sup>

According to the communist understanding of history, however, the task had not been completed yet:

Historical, linguistic and literary sciences will contribute to the internationalist and patriotic education of our people through research into our past, the development of our lifestyle and culture, and the illumination of the great spiritual conquests of our times. The struggle against bourgeois ideology (...) in modern philosophy, political economy, sociology, law, literary and art studies remains an important task for the social sciences.<sup>34</sup>

The embodiment of this understanding was the jubilee of 1969.

#### 4. Anniversary – Rituality – Nation-Centrism

The celebrations were coordinated by a special committee. On February 11 at the Hotel Balkan, a press conference was organized – with participation of scholars, writers and historians. The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences vice-chairman Vladimir Georgiev announced the plans for the jubilee and gave a brief presentation on the deed of Cyril. The anniversary calendar focused on two dates: February 14 (the date of Cyril's death, i.e. essentially a religious feast of the saint) and May 24 (the feast/day of the Slavonic alphabet). On February 13, an opening ceremony was organized to celebrate the new monument of Cyril and Methodius in the garden in front of the National Library in Sofia. The event was accompanied by a great parade, patriotic songs and solemn speeches of the representatives of both the science and the authorities. On February 14, there was a solemn assembly at the Sofia University with presentations on Cyril. In the evening, there was a celebration in the Academy, also with presentations on the subject. On the same day, in Rome, a government delegation, with the Minister of Education Stefan Vasilev and the President of the BAS Angel Balevski among its

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<sup>33</sup> Bozhkov 1969, p. 183.

<sup>34</sup> Bozhkov 1969, pp. 198–199.

members, laid flowers on Cyril's grave. On May 21-23, there was an international scientific symposium. On May 24, a traditional parade was organized.<sup>35</sup> In addition, there were many publications for the jubilee: a special collection of scientific articles dedicated to Cyril published by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (1969), a collection of symposium presentations (1971) and a summary book, published in 1972, which contained the "best" of the political and scientific presentations on the subject.<sup>36</sup> There were also many promotional and popular publications on the occasion, written by scholars in accessible language.<sup>37</sup>

All events were organized with the participation of both the government officials (such as the Minister of National Education, the honorary chairman of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the chairman of the Bureau of the National Assembly, the head of the Department of Science and Education at the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the president of the Committee for Arts and Culture) and scientists (the chairman and vice-chairman of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, prominent professors, academicians), and even the head of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Representatives of the intelligentsia and the masses were also among the regular participants – all diverted from the routine of their everyday life and thrown into the routine of the anniversary. The same people with the same speeches in the same format. The ritual and the repetitiveness of a communist holiday was realized in its fullest form.

As claimed by Ivan Elenkov, communism is a "universal culture of organized showiness."<sup>38</sup> In a totalitarian society, the government controls the public places of cultural exchange. In order to retain the power, the regime constantly needs new events to fulfil the prophecies of the ideology: anniversaries, exhibitions, sessions, demonstrations. Anniversaries are the most suitable for ideological purposes because of their three-dimensional message comprising a national holiday, a historical storyline and future goals.

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<sup>35</sup> On the celebrations see for example: Zlatanova, Vasilev 1969; Angelov 1969; Petrov 1969; *Simpozium* 1969; Vasilev 1969; Ilarion 1969; *Spisanie na BAN* 1969a; 1969b; *Tsarkoven vestnik* 1969; *Vecherni novini* 1969a; 1969b; *Rabotnicesko delo* 1969a; 1969b.

<sup>36</sup> See *Konstantin-Kiril Filosof* 1969; 1971; *Deloto na Konstantin-Kiril Filosof* 1972.

<sup>37</sup> See for example Mechev 1969; Topencharov 1969.

<sup>38</sup> Elenkov 2008, p. 151.

Although the communist rituality does not fit into classical terminology because of its external and obligatory character, some valuable analogies can be made. The aim is to experience a specific vision of the world achieved by a substitution of the community. Totalitarian feasts are used as pretext to define the relation between the authorities and the people,<sup>39</sup> they legitimize the revolutionist movement and provide new interpretative schemas,<sup>40</sup> as they express the symbolic power in terms of Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>41</sup> In this sense, they are indeed an instrument of cognitive control. Their effectiveness is based on repetitiveness and performativity. Fixed schemas accustom people to fixed actions (and meanings). The feast is performed according to a script, as totalitarian means are the guards of the script.<sup>42</sup> Mnemonic potential is developed by the formalization and stylization of the language.

According to Stanisław Balbus, stylizations introduce the present perfect mode.<sup>43</sup> In Mircea Eliade's view, commemorative rituals represent the past because they are based on mythization – a cohesion of the past and the present.<sup>44</sup> The paradox lies in the observation that the communist feasts are strictly specific, but in practice both the content and the form remain the same. In the totalitarian state, due to the eternal repetitiveness and showiness of the rituals there is no difference between the festive and the everyday time. As a result, the linear perception of the time is disrupted. The time appears to be homogeneous,<sup>45</sup> and thus, essentially empty, and will ultimately vanish.

Ironically, however, commemorative rituals established a new beginning by referring to the *local* cultural memory. In terms of Aleida Assmann, a construction of a functional memory is related to the use of the *local* storage memory.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, as pointed out by Jan Assmann, in these commemorative events the cultural memory is always updated according to the *current* circumstances. Each selective intervention in the

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<sup>39</sup> Kertzer 1988. For more see: Osęka 2007, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Osęka 2007, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> Bourdieu 1984.

<sup>42</sup> See Świda-Ziemia 1998, pp. 56–57; Osęka 2007, p. 17.

<sup>43</sup> Balbus 1996, pp. 68–70.

<sup>44</sup> Eliade 1954.

<sup>45</sup> Taylor 1989.

<sup>46</sup> A. Assmann 2011, pp. 119–136.



tradition, every receptive act is also a recognition of a specific arrangement of the values. Thus, reception and evaluability are interdependent.<sup>47</sup>

This is the very meaning of the process of rewriting history. The national jubilees were those events in which “Marxist nationalism” or, more precisely, “socialist nation-centrism” was observed as an active participant. As stated by Yannis Sygkelos, “through historiography, the Bulgarian Communist Party presented its own tasks as national and itself as the representative and defender not only of the interests of the working class but of the interests of the entire nation”.<sup>48</sup> The communist and the “nationalist” lines were subordinated to the discourse of unity and continuity.

History is presented as a linear drift towards the socialist era, when Bulgarian history reaches its peak. Thus, the historical narration justifies the new path of the Fatherland Front and socialism.<sup>49</sup>

The metaphorical building of the socialist history resembles a scaffold based on the Marxist theory of formation, the idea of an alliance with the USSR, and the negation of the Church. The gaps are filled with older, traditional interpretations of the national history.<sup>50</sup> The nation as a main subject of history and a particular evaluation of events and figures become a common feature of the “nation-centric” socialism and the bourgeois historiography. It turns out that the liberal-nationalistic tradition of “the Bulgarian bourgeois,” so typical for the ideology of the National Revival, remains a referring point. The rehabilitation of the past means its petrification in a peculiar state, possibly due to the plethora of political initiatives and the supportive scientific discourse.

Thus, the Medieval Past was incorporated into the official storyline, as the focus was on the process of cultural development in Bulgaria. Even the religious heritage of *Slavia Orthodoxa* is reinterpreted in terms of the Marxist ideology as progressive “at that time” (and for its time) because it was oriented against the reactionary and imperialistic culture

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<sup>47</sup> J. Assmann 2006.

<sup>48</sup> Sygkelos 2001, p. 171.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>50</sup> Górný 2007, p. 427.

of Byzantium and the Germans. In this context, for the purpose of the fusion of Marxist and “nationalist” categories, the figure of Cyril was particularly suitable.

## 5. Cyrillo-Methodian legacy

The official discourse presents Cyril as an embodiment of the Cyrillo-Methodian work. His image is constructed on the basis of three elements: his origin, the nature of his work and its incarnation in Bulgaria. Cyril is a Bulgarian, he speaks Bulgarian, so his work is carried out first among the Bulgarians. His achievements, i.e. the Slavic alphabet and the new literary culture are not only a source of the Slavic civilization, but also a contribution to the world civilization as an argument defending the right of peoples to have their own language, culture, and ultimately, freedom. My analysis of the commemorative publications of the 1960s, especially on the occasion of 1969, shows that Cyril’s image is linked to the keyword “enlightenment”. Thus, his work is educational, but also democratic and humane and in this sense, progressive and revolutionary. The fact it has found its fullest realization in Bulgaria is the most crucial. Moreover, Cyril is seen as a forerunner of humanism, Renaissance and progress. He is a patron of the great *exodus* from the medieval darkness. It reveals the primacy of Bulgaria, both as a Slavic and as a socialist country. Cyril’s work is a source of national pride. In this regard, the power and the science fit each other perfectly.<sup>51</sup>

The Party praises the achievements of the Bulgarian science, underlines its importance, considers it a culmination of the Bulgarian thought, an heir of the Cyrillo-Methodian legacy. Here are some of the most expressive words by the Party officials:

For eleven centuries, the Slavic culture has served the causes of peace and progress. Never before has this case had so much strength to accomplish these prospects as today. (...) As we are inspired by those first apostles of the Slavonic Alphabet and Culture, we must work with dedication similar to theirs, in order to achieve the spectacular goal.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> For more, see Dzhevietska 2016a.

<sup>52</sup> Zhivkov 1972.

Eleven centuries ago, the work of Cyril and Methodius championed equal rights of people and their life and progress, so the science of today that studies and is somehow related to their work is a factor of peace, friendship and comprehensive progress among nations.<sup>53</sup>

How should we not be proud that on the historical sky of Bulgaria such suns are shining! How should we not feel pleased that our Fatherland adopted and supported Cyril and Methodius in becoming a cultural torch of the Slavs! (...) The Bulgarian Communist Party is fully prepared to use all the values of our national history, all the victories of our patriotic spirit as weapons whose power will be turned into the energy of the republic.<sup>54</sup>

The work of Cyril and Methodius gained the deepest meaning and significance in the socialist Bulgaria. The 24<sup>th</sup> of May became a national holiday of socialist cultural revolution.<sup>55</sup>

Statements of the scholars fully agree with the political talk of the day, as both serve as a trustworthy basis for the ideological image of Cyril:

The work of Cyril and Methodius as a work of contribution of the Bulgarian people to the Slavic and European historical development is determined by the extremely important circumstances that Bulgarian science has to investigate and reveal: 1) the blood relation of Cyril and Methodius to the Bulgarian Slavs; 2) the beginning of the educational and literary mission of Cyril and Methodius among the Bulgarian Slavs; 3) the Bulgarian-Slavic language and the Bulgarian-Slavic tradition on which the Cyrillo-Methodian work is based, and 4) the implementation and the prosperity of the Cyrillo-Methodian work among the Bulgarian Slavs.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Pavlov 1969, p. 14.

<sup>54</sup> Matev 1972, pp. 55–57.

<sup>55</sup> Vasilev 1969.

<sup>56</sup> Georgiev 1972, p. 114.

What is emphasized here is the Bulgarian progress and the role of science. The work of Cyril and Methodius is seen as a foundation of the Bulgarian socialist culture.

The work of Cyril and Methodius was progressive: Cyril and Methodius faced all the medieval reactionary opposition (...). In their work, Cyril and Methodius confronted the dominant nations and social classes in the medieval Europe, which feared the spread of education among new people and new social environments. (...) The work of Cyril and Methodius fulfils a democratic task; through writings in the vernacular it was possible to integrate popular classes into the culture. (...) Thus, the work of Cyril and Methodius protects ethnicity. Perceived in these lines, the work of Cyril and Methodius receives acknowledgement due to its scale and the fact that it was combative, revolutionary work. There is a clash between (...) the sense of justice and sublime humanity and the reactionism, selfishness and predation of the medieval world.<sup>57</sup>

The greatness of Cyril's work is seen especially vividly if one takes into account its basic ideas in comparison to the already established traditions that impeded the development of the society. And these ideas are: the democratization of culture and literature by introducing the living vernacular into the realms of culture, communication and interaction between cultures, the right of every nation to have its own cultural life and to participate in the global cultural development. And even more, this is not just a novelty but a prerequisite for revolution, revolutionary thinking and action in the lives of many people. This vigorous measures against Rome and Tsarigrad are a sign of the hidden revolutionary force of the Slavonic alphabet.<sup>58</sup>

In this discourse, the Bulgarian Communists are the only heirs of the Cyrillo-Methodian legacy, the true followers of the Slavic Enlighteners.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Georgiev 1972, pp. 111–112.

<sup>58</sup> Angelov 1972, p. 220.

<sup>59</sup> For more see Dzhevietska 2017.

## 6. Conclusions

In this way, as outlined above, the symphony is performed. Firstly, it is expressed in gestures, in the showiness, in the interaction of power and science, in the cooperation performed in the ritual. But above all it is expressed in the terms of conditionality of the correlation of words. It manifests itself both in the message and in the correlation of functions of the Party and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (hence, the authorities and the science). In this sense, we call this phenomenon a *symphonia*<sup>60</sup> – as they speak in one voice (as an expression of their unanimity). The official discourse points out that the Party and the Academy of Sciences supported each other. The communist authorities ensured proper coordination, financing and popularization of research. Scholars paid back with the truth about the spiritual power of the nation. The goal was one: to respond to “the will of the people,” as represented by the Party, not only administratively or even ideologically, but also culturally. The important place awarded to the scientists within the rituals suits their traditional *habitus*, since they were used, firstly – to play a role in ensuring the national identity, in fighting for the national ideals, and secondly – to build a positive vision of the past, by showing the national glory, which can be called a “rightist” reinterpretation of history.<sup>61</sup> Thus, the Party gave them a unique opportunity. Thereby, they both cooperated in implementing a strategy, which can be called narrativization.<sup>62</sup> They provided a new (hi)story through commemorative feasts and publications, which guaranteed not only the legitimization of the communist power, but also the illusion of complete unanimity.<sup>63</sup> The result of this cognitive control was an experience of eternal harmony, which, through the repetitive rituality, was to become a *habit*.

The subordination of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to the Party, however, was not only an ideological consequence. In a communist

<sup>60</sup> In Greek: *συμφωνία* (*syn-* “together” + *phone* “voice, sound”).

<sup>61</sup> On the rightist and leftist interpretation of the history see Raphael 2003, pp. 58–59. Cf. Górny 2007, pp. 417–420.

<sup>62</sup> On the narrativization as one of three strategies of legitimization, see Thompson 1990. Cf. Zaremba 2001, pp. 22, 33.

<sup>63</sup> On the issue of the unanimity as the real aim of the propaganda, see Ellul 1965. Cf. Oseka 2007, pp. 246–247.

society, the dividing line between political and administrative power does not exist. There is a totalitarian fusion of power and science, party and nation. As stated by Yannis Sygkelos, “the process of identification of power and society and the process of homogenising of the social space are interlinked”.<sup>64</sup> This results in the national state becoming totalitarian. This complete identification occurs even on one more level, important from the perspective of the history of science. Since, as the communist ritual suggests, there is no archive, but only the eternal canon, the perspectives are merging. There is no separation between the functional and the storage memory, and the boundaries between the attitude of a believer and a researcher, between the reverence for the past and the scientific curiosity are blurred.<sup>65</sup> As Aleida Assmann points out, this results in a lack of cultural dynamics. Both time and critical thought are petrified. According to Hannah Arendt, under the conditions of totalitarian coercion, the effect of festivity is in the creation of ideological super-sense or rather non-sense.<sup>66</sup>

Commenting on “the nationalism from the left” in Bulgaria, Sygkelos refers to Claud Lefort:<sup>67</sup>

This collectivistic conceptualisation of the people and the nation comprises what Lefort calls the totalitarian image of the ‘Body’ or ‘People-as-One’ (that is, an imaginary classless society), writes Sygkelos, but also, what we might call, ‘Nation-as-One’, since the Party had equated both its own political frontiers and those of the Fatherland Front with the national frontiers<sup>68</sup>.

This homogenization of the will meets the hegemony of power. Here, hegemony – in terms of Antonio Gramsci<sup>69</sup> – refers to the articulation of discourses that are able to construct a new common sense that can express the national and popular aspiration in a broad sense

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<sup>64</sup> Sygkelos 2001, p. 243.

<sup>65</sup> I refer here to the terminology of Aleida Assmann. Cf. A. Assmann 2008; 2011, pp. 119–136.

<sup>66</sup> Arendt 1979, pp. 457–458. Cf. Osęka 2007, pp. 14–15.

<sup>67</sup> Lefort 1986.

<sup>68</sup> Sygkelos 2001, p. 243.

<sup>69</sup> Gramsci 1971.

through a ‘historical bloc’.<sup>70</sup> Based on the reinterpretation of history, this “new” nation-centric model turns out to be the best ideological tool. Totalitarianism was generated by patriotism.

It is through this unanimity, showiness, annihilation of time, and “speaking in one voice” (symphony in form and content) that totalitarian jubilee became an incarnation of the Nation-as-One. The dividing line between political power and spiritual power does not exist. The hegemony is possible precisely because of the symphony of the scientific and the state authorities being identified as the embodiment of both the spiritual and the political power. Here, the symphony as a doctrine is only an analogy, but it expresses something more than an agreement. If the science ensures the spiritual strength of the state, as pointed out by the Party, and if the Party is the embodiment of the Nation, because the communism is a realization of the national path, as confirmed by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, it is worth thinking about this phenomenon in terms of spiritual and political power. In fact, the Party homogenizes and hegemonizes everything, but in the official discourse these two dimensions are preserved. Science as power serves spiritual development, as it embodies the spiritual power of the Nation. The authorities protect the spiritual – referring to both national and socialist – commonwealth, as they politically represent the People. If the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences was to support the cultural progress through the development of social and historical sciences, the Party had to approve the new storyline. And the communist jubilees related to the narrative of Cyril and Methodius were the perfect representation of this self-representing symphony. A symphony of the two: power and science. A symphony which was neutralized in practice, but in theory – was solemnly praised.

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Sygkelos 2001, p. 247.

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